



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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November 18, 2004

TO: Chief School Administrators
Principals
Charter School Lead Persons

FROM: Richard C. Ten Eyck, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Programs and Assessment

SUBJECT: Student Health Update: Resources

This memo is to make you aware of a number of school health activities, awards, opportunities, and accomplishments that impact New Jersey schools. I hope you will find this information useful as it contains tips on grants and funding as well as upcoming professional development opportunities. Please share this information with supervisors and staff.

Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids: Obesity

In September 2004, the results of a statewide retroactive study of the heights and weights of sixth grade students were announced at a statewide press conference. This study, conducted by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), determined that sixty percent of New Jersey's sixth grade students are of normal weight. That is good news; however, 40 percent of our sixth grade students are at risk for lifelong health problems because they are already overweight or obese.

This is a serious problem and one that impacts education in a number of ways. Children who are overweight are more likely to develop serious health conditions such as asthma and diabetes. Children with chronic health problems are more likely to miss school and may have difficulty functioning when they are in school. In addition, many of these young people may be bullied or teased by their peers, contributing to a host of social and emotional problems that can interfere with academic achievement.

For a copy of the summary report, Childhood Weight Status: New Jersey 2003-2004, please go to <http://www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/obesity.pdf>. Please examine your school's current policies and practices regarding physical activity and nutrition to ensure that they support a health-enhancing environment for all children.

Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids: GetFitNJ Makes Physical Activity Fun

The Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids campaign, along with the New Jersey Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, spearheaded the GetFitNJ Challenge. GetFitNJ challenges all New Jersey citizens to participate in physical activity 30-60 minutes each day. Participants receive recognition once they have completed six weeks of regular physical activity. Log on to www.nj.gov/getfitnj to find out more about this tool to increase health-enhancing physical activity.

Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids: Health and Physical Education Standards

The Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Core Curriculum Content Standards were adopted by the State Board of Education at the April 2004 meeting. Copies of the standards were sent to every building principal and chief school administrator in May 2004 and again in November 2004. You can view the new standards at www.nj.gov/njded/aps/cccs/chpe or at www.njpep.org/standards/index.html.

The National Standards for Physical Education: Moving into the Future has been revised as well. These standards reflect the current thinking on what students should know and be able to do as a result of a quality physical education program and were used as a resource when developing the New Jersey standards. You can access the revised standards at www.aahperd.org. In addition, the National Health Education Standards: Achieving Health Literacy is being revised for release in the 2005-2006 school year. For more information, contact Linda Morse at (609) 777-4102.

Healthy Choices, Healthy Kids: Let's Get Fit CD-ROM

Last year, each New Jersey K-8 school received a copy of Let's Get Fit, a CD-ROM developed in collaboration with the New Jersey Network (NJN). Over the last year, department staff featured video clips from the CD at state conferences and workshops but has found that very few teachers have ever seen the video. The video and accompanying booklet provided important feedback on issues such as physical education, recess, school sport programs and school lunches. If you haven't looked at your copy of the booklet or CD, please do so or pass it on to a teacher or supervisor who may be able to use it with students and their families. If you would like an additional copy of the CD-ROM, please contact Jim McCall at (609) 777-4809.

School Health Program Evaluation

In the near future, both federal and state regulations will require all schools receiving funds for school breakfast and lunch programs to develop nutrition and wellness plans.

To help you prepare for this, the department is offering training in a program evaluation tool, the School Health Index, which will help you create a safe, healthy school environment. The School Health Index was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help schools evaluate existing physical activity and nutrition programs and services. It helps small teams of school administrators, teachers, food service staff, parents, students, and community experts focus on critical issues that support the health of students and staff. The index process is an effective professional development tool that helps school staff identify how programs in the classroom, the gymnasium, on the playground, and in the cafeteria work together to support student health.

The department will offer a one-day training session for those schools interested in improving their school health environment. If you are interested in this process and would like to send a representative to this free training, please contact Dr. Jim McCall, health and physical education coordinator, at (609) 777-4809 by **December 17, 2004**.

Carol M. White Physical Education Award Winners

America's schoolchildren in 237 school districts and non-profit, community-based organizations across the country will benefit from nearly \$69 million from the U.S. Congress this year to help improve school physical education programs. The 2004 awardees of the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) grants, ranging in size from \$64,700 to \$721,296 over a period of 12 to 36 months, were awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. Five New Jersey school districts and two community agencies received PEP grants: Bergenfield (\$385,197), Old Bridge Township (\$303,830), Newton (\$67,728), Bergen County Technical Schools (\$489,500), Franklin Township (\$384,660), the Interstate Urban Consortium, Inc. of Jersey City (\$385,066) and the YMCA of Westfield (\$157,500).

The program, part of the No Child Left Behind Act, provides grants to local school districts and community-based organizations to initiate, expand, or improve physical education programs, including after-school programs, for students in grades kindergarten through 12. School districts will use PEP grants to fund activities including staff development and the purchase of equipment and other support necessary to enable students to actively participate in and enjoy physical education activities. Over 1500 applications were received for these funds.

These are not the first New Jersey schools to receive PEP grants and the number of grantees and the amount of federal funds has increased each year. I encourage every New Jersey school to take advantage of this opportunity to improve the health of students. For more information on how your school can apply, contact Dr. Jim McCall at (609) 777-4809 or go to www.nj.gov/njded/aps/cccs/chpe.

NASPE STARS Award Program

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) STARS program honors excellence in K-12 school physical education programs. In the 2003-04 school year, Fleetwood Elementary School in Mount Laurel, NJ received this prestigious national award. The program recognizes five achievement levels and requires a focus on standards-based instruction, developmentally appropriate practices, and safe school environments. Winning programs must be taught by licensed physical education teachers. For more information on how your school can become a NASPE STAR, please go to www.naspeinfo.org/stars.

Health Education Assessment Project (HEAP)

For the last two years, the department has been involved with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) Health Education Assessment Project. The SCASS-HEAP enables the department to have access to an item bank of K-12 test items including multiple choice, extended response and performance tasks along with tested rubrics and anchor papers. This year, the department is working with two pilot districts, South Brunswick and Livingston, to train supervisors and teachers on the use of these items in the classroom. The department intends to expand this project in year three to include additional districts. If your school or district is interested in improving classroom instruction and assessment in health education, please contact Dr. Jim McCall at (609) 777-4809 or via email at james.mccall@doe.state.nj.us. Participating districts must be willing to commit to staff training and follow-up and are required to pilot items within the classroom setting.

School Employee Wellness

Every school day in the United States, nearly 3 million teachers instruct our students, more than 200,000 school administrators manage our schools, and over a million other staff transport, care for, and feed our children and ensure that the buildings and grounds are safe and well maintained. Much has been written about strategies to address student health concerns but even less attention has been paid to the health of school employees. In response to this critical need, the Directors of Health Promotion and Education, a national public health department organization, has developed Protecting Our Assets: Promoting and Preserving School Employee Wellness. This manual, developed in collaboration with more than 23 national health and education groups, seeks to guide district boards of education to develop health-promoting policies. As an important component of the coordinated school health program model, school employee wellness may very well be the missing piece to improving student health and academic achievement. For more information on this upcoming initiative, please contact Linda Morse at (609) 777-4102.

Making the Connection: Health and Academic Achievement

Many studies show a direct link between student health and academic performance. Making the Connection: Health and Academic Achievement is a research-based power point presentation that makes the case for improved student health through coordinated school health programs. This presentation was developed by the Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (SSDHPER) and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and supported by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Limited copies of the CD-ROM are available, free of charge, by contacting Dr. Jim McCall at (609) 777-4809. You can also download the entire presentation at www.thesociety.org. You can customize the presentation to include local or state data and demographics.

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